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Wyoming Valley Flood Scenes



≈ March 2, 1902 ≈

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ELMER J. WILLMAN,

J. A. BURKE,

FRANK R. ST. JOHN,

PUBLISHERS.



THE most destructive flood in the history of the Wyoming Valley was that which occurred on Sunday, March 2, 1902, the waters of the Susquehanna River bursting their bounds and flowing over a vast area built with houses.

Deep snow covered the watershed of the Susquehanna and of the tributaries emptying into it and this was suddenly melted by rising temperature and a rain fall of over two inches. The melted snow and rain caused the river to rise rapidly and the ice to break February 28. All day of Saturday, March 1, the water went up inch by inch and towards evening the rise became more rapid. All of Saturday night and Sunday the current became greater, the maximum being reached at near mid-night on Sunday, when the gage showed thirty-one and three-tenths feet above the low water mark.

The scenes of that memorable Sunday are indescribable. The entire flats from Wilkes-Barre to Kingston, including the village of Westmoor, were inundated, scores of houses being more or less under water. In South Wilkes-Barre most of Firwood was covered with water and the community which had sprung up there within a couple of years was flooded. Riverside, another picturesque settlement on the lowlands, was in about all portions affected, while Irving Park, on which there are not many houses, was also swept with the overflow.

The waters went over the river common and North and South River streets to the houses. South of South street most of the thoroughfares were under water over to South Main street, on which latter street boats were used below Sullivan street. West River street was a lake and on South River below South and on Carey avenue the water was four and five feet deep in places. Most of the streets in the area bounded by South street and the city line and by South Main and the river were submerged.

In Plymouth, West Nanticoke, Buttonwood, Forty Fort, Wyoming, West Pittston, Kingston, and other settlements along the river the water covered the streets lying near the stream and surrounded the houses.

Scores of families at Westmoor, Riverside and Firwood had taken warning by the flood of December 15, 1901, when those sections were also inundated and houses surrounded, and moved to places of safety, or else the record of disaster would have been more appalling. Others, however, did not take this precaution, and remained in their homes. The anguish they suffered on that Saturday night when the raging current became deeper and deeper about them will never be forgotten. During those long, dark hours, cries for help were heard here and there and men in boats, among them members of the Wilkes-Barre police force, went to the rescue of the imprisoned people. There were many narrow escapes, some of them of a most thrilling nature. Hundreds of people were taken from their homes during the night and on Sunday.

There were eight fatalities in Wilkes-Barre and vicinity so far as heard from—people swept from bridges, drowned while attempting to cross the flats, etc. Some of the fatalities occurred after most desperate battling with the maddened waters.

The railroads entering Wilkes-Barre suffered incalculable damage, particularly the Lehigh Valley and New Jersey Central, and for a couple of days there were no through trains. Bridges were swept away and great portions of roadbed were washed out. It was months before the damage was entirely repaired. Wyoming Valley's street car system was also paralyzed and it was a couple of weeks before cars were run regularly.

Thousands of people flocked to Wilkes-Barre to see the sights and visited the flooded districts. It was most curious to see boats on River and Academy streets and other thoroughfares of like prominence, even on portions of South Main street.

When the water had subsided there was in many places a scene of wreck and ruin. The streets were covered with mud. In houses where the water had entered the lower floors—and there were scores of them—there was a covering of mud and where furniture and carpets had not been removed they were destroyed. Foundation walls were in some instances washed out and the houses battered by floating ice. The damage ran into thousands of dollars and had not the people profited by the inundation of a few months previous and removed their belongings from cellars and first floors it would have been very much greater.

The Wilkes-Barre Record started a fund for the relief of the sufferers and it reached the sum of \$2,089.78. The United Charities cared for dozens of families, finding shelter for them and furnishing them with provisions and coal before and after they were able to return to their damaged homes. Collections were taken up in some of the churches.

The previous largest flood and the largest of which there is any authentic record occurred in 1865. At that time the water reached something over a foot higher than the flood under consideration but there was not near so much damage by the 1865 inundation, for the reason that where now there are thickly built communities there were then only fields. There were then few houses in the area now covered by Westmoor, Riverside and Firwood.

EUGENE T. GIERING.



THE STORY OF THE RIVER'S RISE IS TOLD IN THE FOLLOWING FIGURES:

Thursday, Feb. 27—
6:30 a. m. 9.6

Friday, Feb. 28—
12:30 noon 11.8
3 p. m. 12.9
6 p. m. 19.5
7 p. m. 21.0
8 p. m. 24.4
9 p. m. 26.2
10 p. m. 27.0
11 p. m. 28.4
11:30 p. m. 30.0
12:30 a. m. 31.3

Saturday, March 1—
1 a. m. 21.1
1:30 a. m. 28.1
2 a. m. 28.2
2:30 a. m. 28.0
3 a. m. 27.9
5 a. m. 27.5

8 a. m. 27.5
10 a. m. 28.0
12 noon 28.3
2 p. m. 28.3
4 p. m. 28.5
6 p. m. 28.7
8 p. m. 28.9
10 p. m. 28.7
12 midnight 29.1

Sunday, March 2—

3 a. m. 29.7
4 a. m. 29.9
5 a. m. 30.0
6:30 a. m. 30.2
7:30 a. m. 30.5
9 a. m. 30.6
11 a. m. 30.8
1 p. m. 30.9
3 p. m. 31.0
5 p. m. 31.1
7 p. m. 31.2

9 p. m. 31.3
11 p. m. 31.3
12 midnight 31.2

The water was highest at 9 p. m. on Sunday, when the river gage measured 31.3 feet. Thus it remained until midnight on Sunday, when it slowly began receding, standing 31.2 at that hour. Monday's story is told in the following figures:

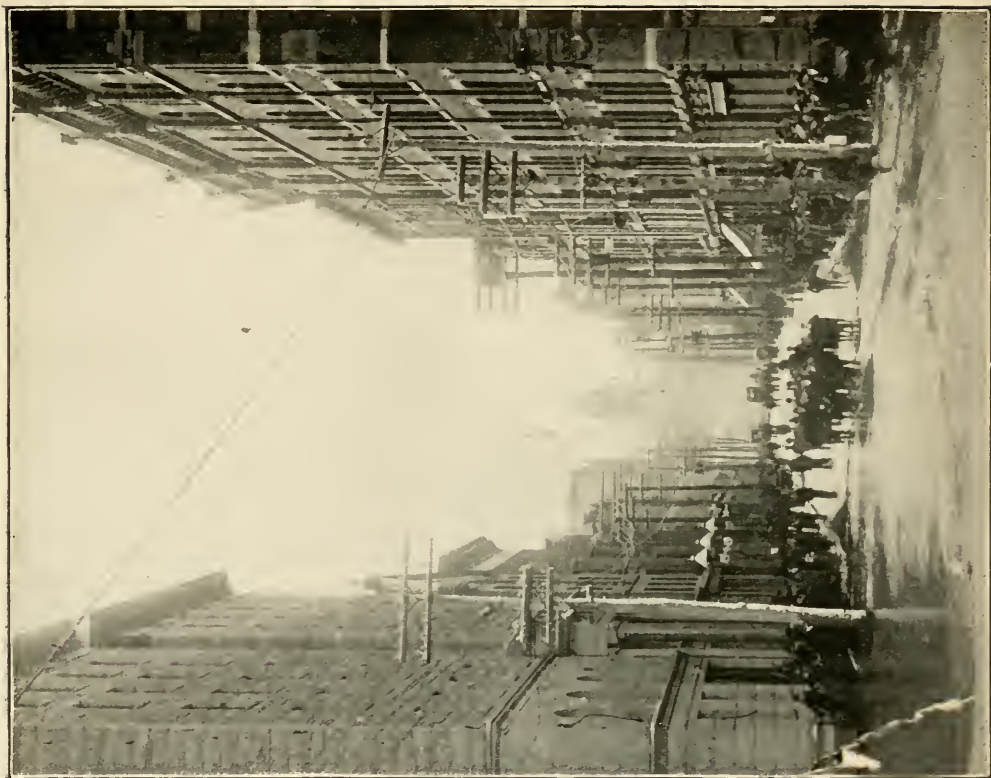
5 a. m. 31.1
7 a. m. 30.9
9 a. m. 30.7
11 a. m. 30.5
1 p. m. 30
3 p. m. 30
7 p. m. 28.9
9 p. m. 26.6

There were many comparisons with previous floods. The record of recorded floods—omitting fractions—according to the new figures on the government gage are as follows:

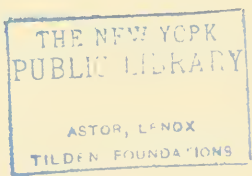
1865 flood 34 feet.
1893 flood 27 feet.

1901 flood 28 feet.
1902 flood 31 feet.

Luke, Photo.



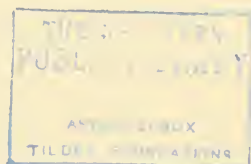
WILKES-BARRE—Looking up West Market Street, from Bridge.



Luke, Photo.



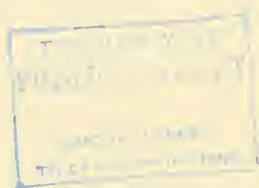
WILKES-BARRE—View of West Market Street Bridge showing Westmoor and Kingston and the great expanse of water.



Zwiebel, Photo.



WILKES-BARRE—The Old Newitt House, showing Capt. Pierce's Residence
in the distance.



Sult, Photo.

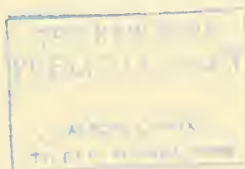


WILKES-BARRE—From Academy Street, looking toward Riverside.

Griffin, Photo.



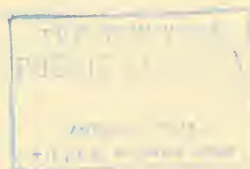
WILKES-BARRE—South River Street, looking north from South Street.



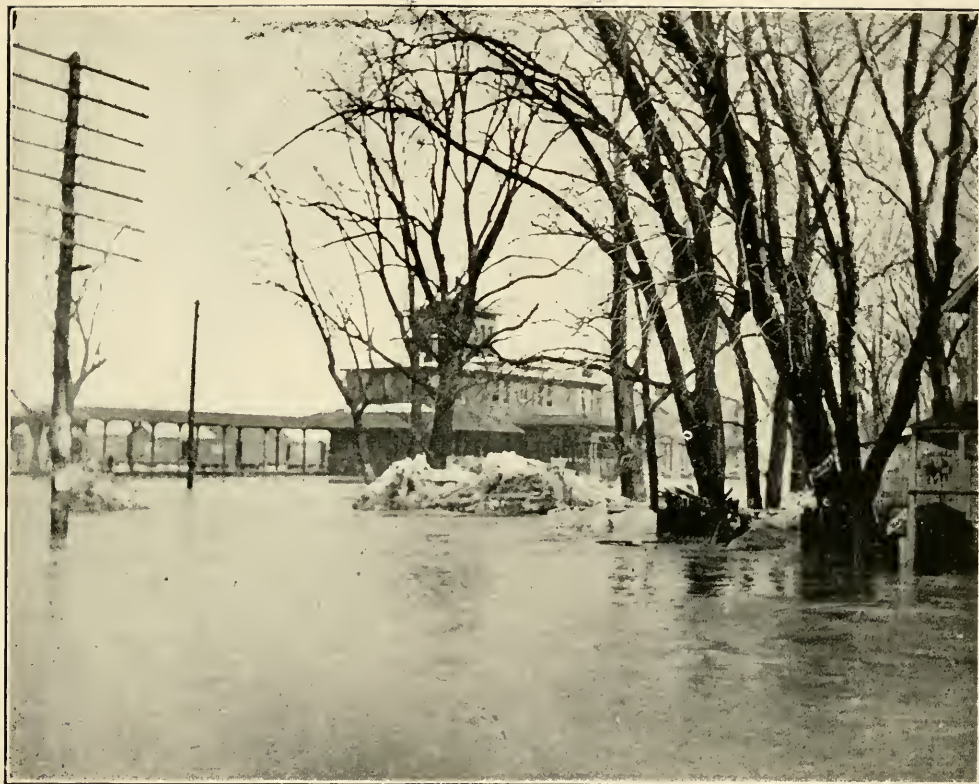
Kaufman, Photo.



WILKES-BARRE—South Franklin Street, looking South from West End Club House.



Leach, Photo.



Wilkes-Barre & Eastern Depot.

Luke, Photo.



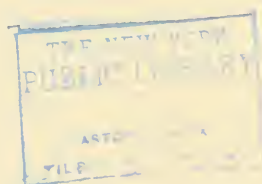
WILKES-BARRE—Dagobert Street, Firwood, looking toward the River.



Robinson, Photo.



WILKES-BARRE—South River Street, above Academy Street.



Leach, Photo.



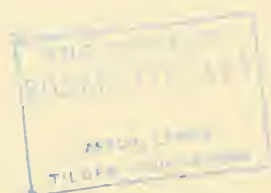
WILKES-BARRE—Hazle Street at Charter House.



Luke, Photo.



WILKES-BARRE—Irving Park, looking toward Riverside.



Zwiebel, Photo.



WILKES-BARRE—St. John's Lutheran Church, corner Academy and South River Streets.

Zwiebel, Photo.



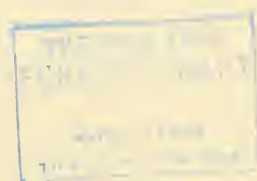
WILKES-BARRE—Corner of Carlisle and Horton Streets.



Kaufman, Photo.



WILKES-BARRE—Academy Street, looking toward the River from Franklin Street.



Griffin, Photo.



WILKES-BARRE—View of South River Street, taken from Bridge, showing Wyoming Valley Hotel and Coal Exchange Building.



Kaufman, Photo.



WILKES-BARRE—South River Street, looking south from Northampton St.

Stauffer, Photo.

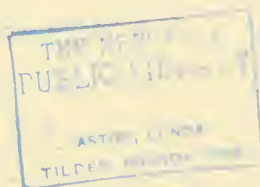


WILKES-BARRE—Church Street.

Luke, Photo.



WILKES-BARRE—Looking down North River Street from Union Street showing Ice on River Bank.



Stearns & Wildermuth, Photo.



WILKES-BARRE—South River Street, from Sullivan Street, looking toward Academy Street.

Luke, Photo.



WILKES-BARRE—West Market Street Bridge, showing Ice on River Bank.



Griffin, Photo.



WILKES-BARRE—South Main Street from Ash Street, looking south.

Stauffer, Photo.

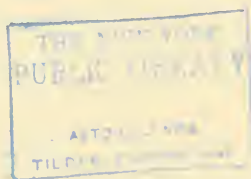


WILKES-BARRE—Barney Street, looking south from Hanover Street.

Derby, Photo.



WILKES-BARRE—Academy Street, in the vicinity of West River Street,
looking east.



Griffin, Photo.



WILKES-BARRE—View of North River Street from Bridge, showing
the Sterling Hotel.

Zwiebel, Photo.



WILKES-BARRE—Penn'a R. R. Tracks from New Franklin Street, to
Barney Street.

Kaufman, Photo.

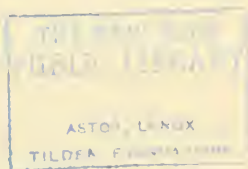


WILKES-BARRE—Sullivan Street, from Franklin Street, looking toward River Street.

Griffin, Photo.



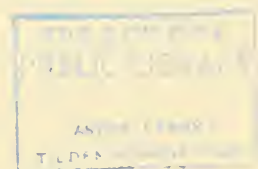
WILKES-BARRE—Corner South and South River Streets, looking south.



Zwiebel, Photo.



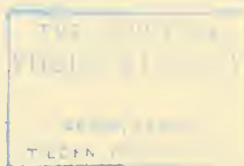
WILKES-BARRE—Hanover Street, from South Main Street, looking toward
Carey Avenue.



Kaufman, Photo.



WILKES-BARRE—South River St., looking north from Northampton St.



Stearns & Wildermuth, Photo.



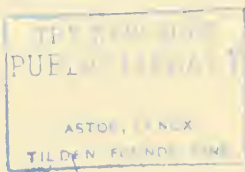
WILKES-BARRE—Looking up the River, taken from the roof of Thos. Atherton's residence, West River Street.



Derby, Photo



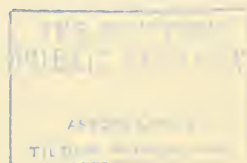
WILKES-BARRE—Susquehanna Street, at Carey Avenue.



Stearns & Wildermuth, Photo.



WILKES-BARRE—Corner of Sullivan and South River Streets, looking toward Franklin Street.



Britt, Photo.



WILKES-BARRE—D. & H. R. R. Tracks looking toward the River from
Carey Avenue.



Kaufman, Photo.



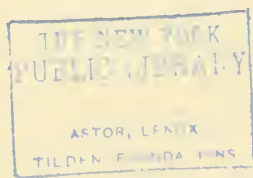
WILKES-BARRE—River Street, looking north, showing Coal Exchange Building.



Kaufman, Photo.



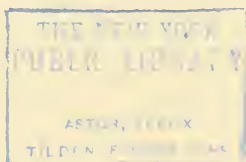
WILKES-BARRE—South Main Street, looking north from South Wilkes-Barre.



Zwiebel, Photo.



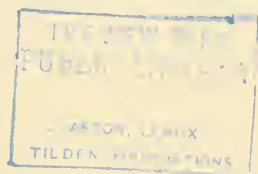
WILKES-BARRE—Ross Street, looking toward the River, from Franklin St.



Griffin, Photo.



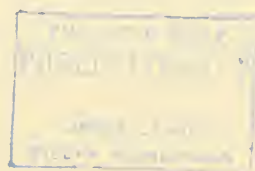
WILKES-BARRE—Picture of cab in which Reiley attempted to reach his home in Luzerne but was drowned in the attempt.



Fritsch, Photo.



EAST PITTSTON—Damage by flood on Railroad Street, showing cave-in of Stone Culvert.





WEST PITSTON—River Street.



Hendershot, Photo.



KINGSTON—Market Street, at Roat's Corners, looking toward Westmoor.

Hendershot, Photo.



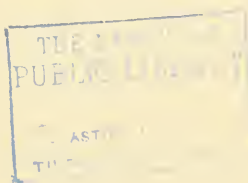
KINGSTON—Wyoming Avenue, looking south from Pringle Street.



Hendershot, Photo.



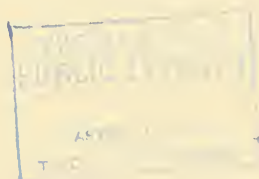
KINGSTON—Rutter Street.



Hendershot, Photo.



KINGSTON—Hoyt Street.



Kanter, Photo.



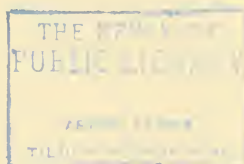
EDWARDSVILLE—Rear of Main Street, looking toward Bartel's Brewery.



Kanter, Photo.



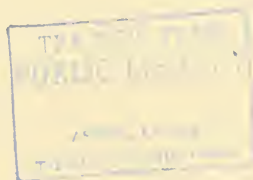
EDWARDSVILLE—Main Street, showing Grocery Store in Creek.



Kanter, Photo.



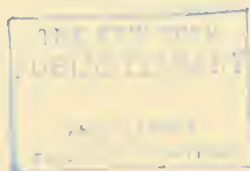
EDWARDSVILLE—Main Street, looking west.



Beacham, Photo.



PLYMOUTH—Main Street, looking west.



Beacham, Photo.



PLYMOUTH—Looking up East Main Street.

Beacham, Photo.



PLYMOUTH—Main Street.

Pannebecker, Photo.

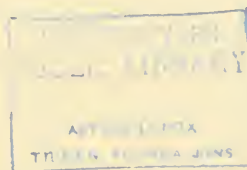


NANTICOKE—Penn'a R. R. Depot.

Pannebecker, Photo,



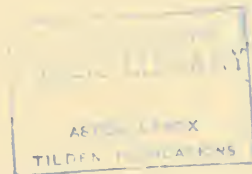
NANTICOKE—View of Bridge and River, looking east from Honey Pot Knob.



Pannebecker, Photo.



NANTICOKE—Nanticoke Brick Yard.



Pannebecker, Photo.



NANTICOKE—West End of West Nanticoke from Honey Pot Knob.



